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ABSTRACT

The Specialized Language Activities Program (ESEA Title 3 Project) to motivate students to improve their oral language was conducted in an essentially rural section of Maine with an experimental group and a control group of 80 ninth-grade students with an I.Q. range of 85-100 and poor language usage. Sixty-seven percent of them had repeated at least one grade. Interest-centered units designed to foster extemporaneous oral communication involved the experimental students in teamwork for the planning, writing, and filming of videotape productions. Composition projects, individual reading programs, and student involvement as technical assistants in other classes were also undertaken as part of the experiment, and these activities bolstered the students' self-images. Results of testing before and after participation in the program showed that the experimental group, compared to a control group, demonstrated significant gains in (1) I.Q., (2) reading capability, (3) written composition ability, (4) spoken English, and (5) attitudes toward school. (Thirteen tables of findings are included.) (JM)

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SPECIALIZED LANGUAGE ACTIVITIES: A DESCRIPTION OF THE FIRST YEAR

Oxford Hills High School,
South Paris, Maine

Students entering the ninth grade have at least nine years of instruction in usage and grammar behind them. In the case of the students involved in the study it was found that 67% of them had repeated at least one grade so those students had had more than nine years. Even though they fell into the 85-100 I.Q. range, the repetition of the subject matter should have made some difference. These students, however, exhibited poor usage and command of the language. Their lack of ability with the language was constantly cited by teachers. Specialized Language Activities was designed to motivate the students to use oral language. It was hoped that by being continually placed in situations which would require them to use the language they would have a reason, at last, to use Standard American English in a situation where they really had something to say and someone to whom to say it.

The unit was the basic method for instruction. The units were interest-centered; that is, they focused upon genuine interests of the students. The students worked in groups or production teams. The groups would democratically decide the unit topic to be considered. At the beginning of the year it was necessary to acquaint the students with the equipment, basic production techniques, and the group method of working. The teachers in the program devised several units to be used during this indoctrination period.

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After a unit subject had been chosen the entire group would do some basic research on it. They would consult periodicals available in the classroom, the library, or at home. They would consult the various sources in the school such as the library or other teachers. They would also, of course, call upon their own teacher who served as a resource person.

When enough background material had been gathered, the group would meet to decide about their production. First, they would have to decide upon a basic theme for their videotape presentation. Then there would have to be various committees formed and tasks assigned: the script committee would develop the shooting script; the technical crew consisted of the recorder operator, sound man, camera man, and lighting man; the props and visual committees were responsible for all props and visuals necessary for the production; and, the director. The talent was always chosen from those in the group and tasks were regularly rotated so that all had an equal chance at every job in production.

The shooting script was a major item in each production, yet it was very informal. It would contain the following: some technical information about various shots, prop and visual information, and an outline of basic information to be communicated. The shooting script did not contain any lines

to be memorized by the talent. This was deliberate. When a youngster was on camera he was forced to use his own language ability in order to communicate. He had a strong idea of the message to be presented but had to depend on himself to produce the effect desired by his group for the production.

Props for the productions were often brought from home or obtained around the school. Students were very imaginative about finding suitable props. They prepared visuals; that is, title cards and credits cards for the purpose of giving the production a more professional look at home or in the classroom. Costumes often came from home, but the dramatic club's wardrobe was often the source for these. Toward the end of the year productions became very elaborate, and a certain friendly competition developed among groups.

After a production was completed it was viewed by the entire group. Early in the year the students had viewed some off-air commercial television and had received some teacher-led criticism instruction. They viewed their own productions from many points of view. They watched for technical errors and developed an eye for these early in the year. The student operating the camera, for instance, would see a particular shot he could improve. Most interesting to the study was to watch youngsters who were the talent in a production see and hear themselves on the playback. They would readily determine an error made in language use. Often the students would want

to retake a tape. It should be emphasized here, however, that technical perfection was not the goal of Specialized Language Activities. A motivation for oral language use and student involvement in language experience were the main objectives of the program.

Other aspects of the language arts were not neglected in this program, but they were approached in a less traditional way. Composition took many forms. Work in research for shooting scripts frequently required the students to write. They also had to write letters upon occasion for various kinds of information. Each student also had a folder in the classroom to which he was encouraged to submit examples of his writing. The teacher would often discuss the student's folder with him on an individual basis. Although nothing was specifically required for these folders, the students responded to them very well and most submitted on a regular basis. The most formal composition requirement was in the form of a journal. Fader discusses this device extensively in his book[1] and his suggestions were adapted for use in the program. Each student was given a journal and required to write in it each week. He could copy something into it if he could not think of anything to write(several did this at first, but soon stopped). The journals were left in the classroom. If a

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[1]Daniel N. Fader, Hooked On Books, Berkley Publishing Corporation, New York, New York, 1966, pp. 26-33.

student did not want the teacher to read a page, he would write "no" at the top. The teacher was honor-bound not to read it. The journal was a regular writing assignment, and many students wrote beyond the minimum requirement. In addition, there were three typewriters available for student use. At first, these were toys, but for many the machines became a device to encourage written expression.

Reading and literature was approached on an informal and individual basis. A real effort was made to have suitable materials at hand in the classroom. The students regularly went to the library and were encouraged to always have a book to read. Students were given in-class time to read silently at least once a week. Students often had the opportunity to talk about a book individually with a teacher.

If two or three students were reading the same book, certain group activities often resulted. A teacher might audiotape a chapter of the book so the students could listen to it at the listening table. Another popular group activity was role-playing. Students would often use a common reading experience as the base for a videotape production. A vivid scene might be recreated or a sequel added to the novel.

Students were not required to report on books. They were asked to keep a record of books read. When a teacher sat down to talk with a student about his reading, it was expected that he would be in the process of reading a book. Class sets

of books were not used for study by an entire class. The low-pressure, individual approach to reading encouraged students to read.

Specialized Language Activities was not a program with any stigma of slow learner attached to it. Actually, it proved quite the opposite; that is, there was a certain status attached to being in the program which the youngsters in the experimental group enjoyed. The program brought the students into contact with students from other tracks. This is usually not the case in most schools. Other English classes were encouraged to prepare productions. All technical work was done by students in the experimental group. Social studies and science teachers would often request that a commercial television program be taped off-air for showing in their classes. This would be done and Specialized Language Activities students would handle the playback in those classes. This put them in a school environment they had not experienced before.

The athletic department was interested in having games and practice sessions in many sports videotaped. Specialized Language Activities students did this. They operated the equipment in the recording and during the playback. They had the opportunity to become involved in a portion of school activities that, for most of them, had not been open to them before.

All of this exposure to the rest of the school resulted in a bolstered self-image. In addition to this, the involvement in a stimulating program designed for them contributed to a pleasant learning situation.

The program was well-equipped for meeting the needs of the groups. The presence of equipment has a great deal to do with its use. Kelly found "a significant relationship between the availability of equipment and teachers' attitudes toward audio-visual materials."[1] Since the Specialized Language Activities technique depends upon the use of equipment as a motivating device, a variety was provided. Operation of the equipment is not difficult and was easily mastered by teachers and students. As soon as the operational techniques were mastered by the students, the teachers did not have to be concerned with it. Equipment failure posed no problems during the year. It was interesting to note that the students not only quickly mastered operating the equipment but also mastered the technical language at the same time.

Role-playing as a teaching technique has been on the educational scene for a long time. The hardware involved in the Specialized Language Activities approach served as an effective motivator. Another real reason for the success of the program has to be the regularity of the role-playing experiences. Since these particular students had a real need for

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[1]Gaylen B. Kelley, An Analysis of Teachers' Attitudes Toward the Use of Audio-Visual Materials, Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, Boston University, 1959, p. 105.

oral experiences in the school situation, this is what was emphasized. This writer is convinced that a successful technique such as this has to be a major item in the curriculum and not an occasional inclusion.

STATISTICAL EVALUATION

1. A. MEETING THE MAJOR OBJECTIVES

The major objectives dealt with the improvement of language facility and attitude toward school. In order to measure growth in language facility, the following experiment was set up:

(1) SELECTION OF STUDENTS:

The freshmen were given the Otis Mental Ability Test, Form EM. The experimental groups and control groups were made up of youngsters in the 85-100 I.Q. range. Out of an entering class of 304 it was predicted that 104(34.13%) of them would fall in this range.[1] Eighty youngsters were then chosen to participate. Because of scheduling difficulties, only those students electing industrial arts, home economics, or business subjects were able to participate. The eighty students were divided into four groups.

(2) PRE-TESTING

After the students were selected and placed, a writing sample and a speech sample were taken for analysis.

The writing sample was taken on the same day for all students. It lasted one class period. All students were given two sheets of paper and

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[1] Chart of Normal Curve, Percentiles, and Standard Scores, The Psychological Corporation, New York, N.Y.

a motivating paragraph to write about. All students had the same paragraph.

The speech sample was taken by having a ten minute conversation between the researcher and an individual student. These conversations were done after the students had become acquainted with the researcher who used the same basic questions in the conversations with all students. These conversations were all tape recorded and ten percent of the conversation was transcribed for analysis on the same basis as the writing sample. The ten percent transcription was done by transcribing thirty seconds at the end of four minutes and thirty seconds at the end of eight minutes.

(3) EVALUATION OF THE SAMPLES

The samples were evaluated on these general principles: 1. marked deviation from Standard American English, 2. the ratio of multi-clause sentences to single clause sentences, 3. the number of words, 4. mean clause length.

In order to note marked deviation from Standard American English, the following catagories modified from Walter Loban's work were used.[1]

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[1]Loban, Walter, Language Ability, Grades Seven, Eight, and Nine, USOE Cooperative Research Mongraph No. 18, Washington, 1966, p. 13.

(1) Lack of agreement of subject and verb in the third person singular (excluding all forms of the verb to be).

(2) Lack of agreement of subject and verb using only forms of the verb to be

(3) Omission of auxiliary verbs

(4) Non-standard verb forms

(5) Ambiguous placement of a word, phrase, or clause

These catagories were chosen from the Loban study as the most significant deviations from Standard American English for the type of youngster this study concerns.

Barbara D. Miller and James W. Ney in their study of writing improvement found that the number of words written on a writing sample indicates a facility with language.[1] This study also considered the number of words written on the samples.

Kellogg W. Hunt's study is concerned with control over language. In his study he analyzed the ratio of multi-clause sentences to single clause sentences.[2] He found that the appearance

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[1]Miller, B.D., & Ney, J.W. Oral Drills and Writing Improvement in the Fourth Grade. Journal of Experimental Education, 1967, 36, pp. 93-99.

[2]Hunt, Kellogg W., Differences in Grammatical Structures Written at Three Grade Levels, USOE Cooperative Research Program, 1964.

of multi-clause sentences meant that the writer had more to say about a topic; the writer was bringing in more ideas about a subject. This study also determined this ratio and analyzed the ratios.

(4) THE EXPERIMENTAL PROGRAM - SPECIALIZED LANGUAGE ACTIVITIES

The experimental groups participated in the Specialized Language Activities program which had them preparing dramas to produce on videotape.

(5) POST-TESTING

After participating in the study for two semesters, the students were given the following post-tests:

Otis Mental Ability Test, Form FM

Metropolitan Advanced Reading Test, Form CM

Writing Sample

Speech Sample

(6) ANALYSIS OF DATA

The data collected were analyzed in order to provide answers to the following questions:

(1) WERE THE I.Q.'S OF THE PUPILS IMPROVED?

(2) WAS THE READING ABILITY OF THE PUPILS IMPROVED?

(3) WAS ABILITY IN WRITTEN COMPOSITION IMPROVED?

(4) DID SPOKEN ENGLISH IMPROVE?

(5) DID STUDENTS LIVING IN THE COUNTRY BENEFIT MORE THAN IN-TOWN STUDENTS?

(6) WAS THERE A CHANGE IN ATTITUDE TOWARD SCHOOL?

(1) WERE THE I.Q.'S OF THE PUPILS IMPROVED?

Yes. Examination of data displayed in Table I will show that the students involved in the experimental group made a highly significant gain during the year. The students in the control group showed no significant gain at the end of the year. Using the t-test, no significant difference between the two groups was found in the fall test. In the spring, however, the difference in the means was 3.4. Using the t-test, this proved significant at the .05 level.

The Otis Test of Mental Ability was administered to all students in the experimental group and the control group in the fall and spring. Form J was used in the fall and Form K in the spring. These data have been examined in terms of mean gain in I.Q. during the school year; that is, the amount of gain during the time the experiment was being conducted. The inclusion of the pre-treatment and post-treatment I.Q. test as an evaluation instrument was mainly for the purpose of examining not so much a change in I.Q., but a change in attitude.

Most students have been standardized tested to death by the time they reach the ninth grade. Slower students (especially those with reading difficulties) have had wide experience with the frustration of trying to cope with the standardized test in various forms. For

this reason, many students do not respond to the standardized test.

While it is true that the students in the Specialized Language Activities program were deeply involved in classroom experiences designed to improve them intellectually, the highly significant improvement in I.Q. was greater than expected. It was felt that the students in the experimental group might improve their scores on the I.Q. test. A main goal of the program was to improve attitude toward the school situation. By the time the post-tests were given, these students were anxious to perform any school task well. They were willing to put forth a maximum effort. The information contained in Table I shows that these students did make a significant gain in I.Q. The gain was due in part to an attitude change as well as an intellectual change. This gain on the part of the experimental group is important evidence toward the establishment of a curriculum which stresses involvement.

TABLE I

OTIS TEST OF MENTAL ABILITY
(Form J-Fall, Form K-Spring)

GROUP	COMPARISON	MEANS	MEAN DIFFERENCE	TEST	SIGNIFICANCE
Experimental Urban	fall vs spring	93.9 vs 96.6	2.7	Paired	t=3.4 Highly Significant at .01
Experimental Rural	fall vs spring	91.7 vs 96.4	4.7	Paired	t=7.8 Highly Significant at .01
Control Urban	fall vs spring	94.82 vs 94.76	.06	Paired	By Inspection No Significant Difference
Control Rural	fall vs spring	90.8 vs 91.5	.7	Paired	By Inspection No Significant Difference
Fall Test	Experimental vs Control	92.6 vs 93.3	.07	Unpaired Group	t=0.44 No Significant Difference
Spring Test	Experimental vs Control	96.5 vs 93.1	3.4	Unpaired Group	t=1.99 Significant at .05

2. WAS THE READING ABILITY OF THE STUDENTS IMPROVED? IN WHAT WAYS?

Yes. Tables II, III, IV, and V contain the results of the pre and post reading test which was administered to all ninth grade students by the local reading supervisor. The Metropolitan Advanced Reading Test (Fall-Form CM, Spring-Form AM) was chosen as the instrument.

Table II shows that the students in the total experimental group made a highly significant gain in reading grade equivalency at the .01 level. This table does show that the two groups were very similar in ability in the fall, but by spring the experimental group had made a greater improvement in reading grade equivalency and this improvement approached significance at the .05 level.

This improvement occurred even though the students received an unstructured approach to reading. Students read and were helped with reading on an individual basis. Books were chosen by the students rather than by the teachers. Students were not required to "do something" for each book read. Book sharing, however, was an important activity and most often took the shape of role playing experiences for videotape.

TABLE II

METROPOLITAN ADVANCED READING TEST

Grade Equivalent Reading
(Form CM-Fall, Form AM-Spring)

GROUP	COMPARISON	MEANS	MEAN DIFFERENCE	"t" TEST	SIGNIFICANCE
Experimental Urban	fall vs spring	7.28 vs 9.00	1.72	Paired	t=4.74 Highly Significant at .01
Experimental Rural	fall vs spring	7.51 vs 8.45	0.94	Paired	t=3.04 Highly Significant at .01
Experimental Group	fall vs spring	7.41 vs 8.68	1.27	Paired	t=5.28 Highly Significant at .01
Control Urban	fall vs spring	7.85 vs 8.42	0.57	Paired	t=1.72 No Significant Difference
Control Rural	fall vs spring	6.78 vs 7.48	0.70	Paired	t=1.90 No Significant Difference
Control Group	fall vs spring	7.30 vs 7.94	0.64	Paired	t=2.96 Significant at .05
Fall Test	Experimental vs Control	7.41 vs 7.38	.03	Unpaired	t=0.07 No Significant Difference
Spring Test	Experimental vs Control	8.68 vs 7.94	0.74	Unpaired	t=1.71 Not Significant at .05 but better than .10

Tables III and IV do not point out marked differences between the two groups.

Table III displays the findings about the standard scores on the reading grade equivalency levels. The experimental group showed a highly significant improvement in all divisions and in the total group. The total control group also showed a highly significant improvement.

Table IV displays the findings about the word knowledge grade equivalencies and no significant differences were found in this test.

TABLE III

METROPOLITAN ADVANCED READING TEST

Standard Score Reading
(Form CM-Fall, Form AM-Spring)

GROUP	COMPARISON	MEANS	MEAN DIFFERENCE	"t" TEST	SIGNIFICANCE
Experimental Urban	fall vs spring	46.82 vs 53.94	7.12	Paired	t=4.63 Highly Significant at .01
Experimental Rural	fall vs spring	48.70 vs 53.30	4.60	Paired	t=3.85 Highly Significant at .01
Experimental Group	fall vs spring	47.90 vs 53.58	5.68	Paired	t=5.94 Highly Significant at .01
Control Urban	fall vs spring	50.12 vs 53.76	3.64	Paired	t=2.26 Significant at .05
Control Rural	fall vs spring	45.50 vs 48.00	2.50	Paired	t=1.81 No Significant Difference
Control Group	fall vs spring	47.74 vs 50.80	3.06	Paired	t=2.93 Highly Significant at .01
Fall Test	Experimental vs Control	47.90 vs 48.03	0.13	Unpaired	t=0.07 No Significant Difference
Spring Test	Experimental vs Control	53.58 vs 50.80	2.78	Unpaired	t=1.37 No Significant Difference

TABLE IV

METROPOLITAN ADVANCED READING TEST

Grade Equivalent Word Knowledge
(Form CM-Fall, Form AM-Spring)

GROUP	COMPARISON	MEANS	MEAN DIFFERENCE	"t" TEST	SIGNIFICANCE
Experimental Urban	fall vs spring	8.43 vs 8.64	0.21	Paired	t=1.67 No Significant Difference
Experimental Rural	fall vs spring	8.29 vs 8.20	0.09	Paired	t=0.54 No Significant Difference
Experimental Group	fall vs spring	8.35 vs 8.39	0.04	Paired	t=0.36 No Significant Difference
Control Urban	fall vs spring	8.64 vs 8.31	0.33	Paired	t=1.08 No Significant Difference
Control Rural	fall vs spring	7.64 vs 7.42	0.22	Paired	t=1.21 No Significant Difference
Control Group	fall vs spring	8.13 vs 7.85	0.28	Paired	t=1.62 No Significant Difference
Fall Test	Experimental vs Control	8.35 vs 8.15	0.20	Unpaired	t=0.53 No Significant Difference
Spring Test	Experimental vs Control	8.39 vs 7.85	0.54	Unpaired	t=1.39 No Significant Difference

Ordinarily one would not expect to find an indication of attitude in a table displaying the finds of a standardized reading test. Yet, a negative attitude toward school has to be a partial explanation of the lower scores in the spring for the control group in the standard scores on the word knowledge test as displayed in Table V.

The reading supervisor reported that she would have predicted the opposite test results. She administered the test and contrasted the two groups by the way they settled down to the task. The control group listened to the instructions and then commenced work immediately. Since the experimental group has become used to an unstructured approach, they lost a few minutes at the beginning of the class period getting organized for the test.

TABLE V

METROPOLITAN ADVANCED READING TEST

Standard Score Word Knowledge
(Form CM-Fall, Form AM-Spring)

GROUP	COMPARISON	MEANS	MEAN DIFFERENCE	"t" TEST	SIGNIFICANCE
Experimental Urban	fall vs spring	50.47 vs 51.12	0.65	Paired	t=1.09 No Significant Difference
Experimental Rural	fall vs spring	51.57 vs 51.74	0.17	Paired	t=0.21 No Significant Difference
Experimental Group	fall vs spring	51.10 vs 51.48	0.38	Paired	t=0.73 No Significant Difference
Control Urban	fall vs spring	52.35 vs 50.41	1.94	Paired	t=1.84 No Significant Difference
Control Urban	fall vs spring	48.56 vs 47.33	1.23	Paired	t=1.34 No Significant Difference
Control Group	fall vs spring	50.40 vs 48.83	1.57	Paired	t=2.28 Significant at .05
Fall Test	Experimental vs Control	51.10 vs 50.23	0.87	Unpaired	t=0.58 No Significant Difference
Spring Test	Experimental vs Control	51.48 vs 48.83	2.65	Unpaired	t=1.71 No Significant Difference

It certainly should not be overlooked that the experimental group did not receive any concentrated instruction in reading. The emphasis on oral communication via role playing did make a difference on the other aspects of the language arts; in this case, reading. This finding supports Mildred Dawson who says that:

> all of the language arts make use of the same medium of words and all of them follow similar patterns in the use of words, sentences, and structuring of idea. Evidence indicates that anything done to increase effectiveness in one area contributes to the other three [listening, speaking, reading, writing].[1]

Walter Loban also reported positive relationships among listening, speaking, reading, and writing.[2] There seems to be little question about these positive relationships. As far as strengthening the language arts skills for the slow learner it would seem appropriate to use the approach which appeals most to them and capitalize on that aspect which motivates them to use the language. Evidence in this study indicates that the approach must be largely oral.

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[1]Mildred A. Dawson, "The Role of Reading in Relation to Other Areas of Communication," New Frontiers in Reading, (V, International Reading Association Conference Proceedings, New York) pp. 156-57.

[2]Walter D. Loban, The Language of Elementary School Children, (Champaign, Illinois, NCTE, 1965), p. 87.

3. WAS THE ABILITY IN WRITTEN COMPOSITION IMPROVED?

Yes. In two of the three detailed analyses of the writing samples the experimental group showed a highly significant improvement when compared with the control group.

One of the main objectives of the Specialized Language Activities program was to place the students into situations which would require them to use oral language in the hope that they would be motivated to use Standard American English. Table VI testifies that the oral language experience approach has had a considerable carryover in the writing of these students and in their use of Standard American English.

Table VI points out the number of deviations from Standard American English per fifty words in a pre and post writing sample. In the total groups, there is no significant difference between the two groups on the fall sample. In the spring, however, there is a highly significant difference between the two groups. It should be further noted that the total experimental group made a highly significant improvement over their fall scores while the control group did not. In all cases the experimental group showed a decrease in the number of errors, but the control group showed an increase on the number of errors.

TABLE VI

WRITING SAMPLE

Number of Deviations from Standard American English per Fifty Words

GROUP	COMPARISON	MEANS	MEAN DIFFERENCE	"t" TEST	SIGNIFICANCE
Experimental Urban	fall vs spring	1.18 vs 0.41	0.77	Paired	t=4.78 Highly Significant at .01
Experimental Rural	fall vs spring	1.17 vs 0.65	0.52	Paired	Significant at .05
Experimental Group	fall vs spring	1.18 vs 0.55	0.63	Paired	t=4.31 Highly Significant at .01
Control Urban	fall vs spring	1.02 vs 1.47	0.45	Paired	t=1.93 No Significant Difference
Control Rural	fall vs spring	1.90 vs 2.05	0.15	Paired	t=0.35 No Significant Difference
Control Group	fall vs spring	1.51 vs 1.79	0.28	Paired	t=1.08 No Significant Difference
Fall Sample	Experimental vs Control	1.18 vs 1.51	0.33	Unpaired	t=1.37 No Significant Difference
Spring Sample	Experimental vs Control	0.55 vs 1.79	1.24	Unpaired	t=4.91 Highly Significant at .01

Table VII considers the mean number of words in clauses. While the experimental group did not show any significant improvement, the control group did not do as well on the spring sample as on the fall sample, and that difference approaches significance at the .05 level. There is, however, no significant difference between the two groups in this measurement over the course of the year.

TABLE VII

WRITING SAMPLE

Mean Number of Words per Clause

GROUP	COMPARISON	MEANS	MEAN DIFFERENCE	"t" TEST	SIGNIFICANCE
Experimental Urban	fall vs spring	7.18 vs 6.18	1.00	Paired	t=2.33 Significant at .05
Experimental Rural	fall vs spring	7.04 vs 6.78	0.26	Paired	t=0.37 No Significant Difference
Experimental Group	fall vs spring	7.10 vs 6.52	0.58	Paired	t=1.31 No Significant Difference
Control Urban	fall vs spring	6.94 vs 4.94	2.0	Paired	t=4.58 Highly Significant at .01
Control Rural	fall vs spring	6.33 vs 6.14	0.19	Paired	t=0.23 No Significant Difference
Control Group	fall vs spring	6.61 vs 5.61	1.00	Paired	t=1.98 Bordering on Significance at .05
Fall Sample	Experimental vs Control	7.10 vs 6.61	0.49	Unpaired	t=1.48 No Significant Difference
Spring Sample	Experimental vs Control	6.52 vs 5.61	0.91	Unpaired	t=1.64 No Significant Difference

As far as maturity of expression goes, the best indicator examined in this experiment is the ratio of multi-clause sentences to single-clause sentences. The Specialized Language Activities program seems to have made a real difference here.

Table VIII examines the analysis of data collected about the ratio of multi-clause sentences to single clause sentences on the pre and post writing samples.

Further proof of the similarities of the experimental group and the control group can be seen by examining the comparison of the two groups on the fall sample. There was no significant difference between the performance of the two groups on the fall writing sample.

After a full school year, however, there was a highly significant difference between the performance of the two groups on the spring writing sample.

The groups were also compared with themselves. The experimental group showed a highly significant improvement on the spring test while the control group did not.

TABLE VIII

WRITING SAMPLE

Ratio of Multi Clause Sentences to Single Clause Sentences

GROUP	COMPARISON	MEANS	MEAN DIFFERENCE	"t" TEST	SIGNIFICANCE
Experimental Urban	fall vs spring	43.8 vs 64.7	20.9	Paired	t=2.89 Significant at .05
Experimental Rural	fall vs spring	42.7 vs 66.7	24.0	Paired	t=5.09 Highly Significant Difference
Experimental Group	fall vs spring	43.2 vs 65.9	22.7	Paired	t=5.60 Highly Significant Difference
Control Urban	fall vs spring	47.5 vs 54.9	7.4	Paired	t=1.67 No Significant Difference
Control Rural	fall vs spring	53.1 vs 53.8	0.7	Paired	t=0.14 No Significant Difference
Control Group	fall vs spring	50.6 vs 54.3	3.7	Paired	t=1.10 No Significant Difference
Fall Sample	Experimental vs Control	43.2 vs 50.6	7.4	Unpaired	t=1.77 No Significant Difference
Spring Sample	Experimental vs Control	65.9 vs 54.3	11.6	Unpaired	t=2.89 Highly Significant Difference

4. DID SPOKEN ENGLISH IMPROVE?

Yes. A speech sample was taken in the fall and again in the spring. These samples were transcribed and examined in much the same manner as the writing samples. On two of the three items evaluated, the experimental group improved significantly over the control group.

Table IX examines the number of deviations from Standard American English per fifty words. Data in this section show that both groups improved over the course of the year. The total experimental group showed a highly significant decrease in the number of errors in the spring sample. The control group did almost as well and approached significance at the .01 level.

When comparing the two groups, it is found that the differences between their improvement is not significant.

TABLE IX

SPEECH SAMPLE

Number of Deviations from Standard American English per Fifty Words

GROUP	COMPARISON	MEANS	MEAN DIFFERENCE	"t" TEST	SIGNIFICANCE
Experimental Urban	fall vs spring	2.93 vs 1.87	1.06	Paired	t=2.04 Approaching Significance at .05
Experimental Rural	fall vs spring	2.36 vs 1.27	1.09	Paired	t=4.00 Highly Significant Difference
Experimental Group	fall vs spring	2.59 vs 1.51	1.08	Paired	t=4.1 Highly Significant Difference
Control Urban	fall vs spring	2.24 vs 1.71	0.53	Paired	t=3.04 Highly Significant Difference
Control Rural	fall vs spring	2.42 vs 2.01	0.41	Paired	t=1.44 No Significant Difference
Control Group	fall vs spring	2.34 vs 1.88	0.46	Paired	t=2.62 Approaching Significance at .01
Fall Sample	Experimental vs Control	2.60 vs 2.34	0.26	Unpaired	t=0.71 No Significant Difference
Spring Sample	Experimental vs Control	1.51 vs 1.88	0.37	Unpaired	t=1.10 No Significant Difference

Mean clause length is the consideration of Table X. Here we find the experimental group consistently showing an improvement in the spring sample. The exact opposite of this is true for the control group as they show a decrease in mean clause length in the spring sample. Again, this could be in part an indicator of attitude toward "having to do something" in school. It is probably a better indicator of lack of opportunity to really express personal ideas and feelings in a school situation. Since the students in the experimental group had ample opportunity daily for this kind of experience, they were uninhibited in the oral situation and constructed some excellent clauses.

When we examine the differences between the total groups, we find no significant difference in the fall but do find a significant difference in the spring.

The experimental group did show improvement over the fall sample, but it was not a significant improvement. The control group, however, does show a highly significant decrease in mean clause length.

TABLE X

SPEECH SAMPLE

Mean Number of Words per Clause

GROUP	COMPARISON	MEANS	MEAN DIFFERENCE	"t" TEST	SIGNIFICANCE
Experimental Urban	fall vs spring	4.49 vs 4.51	0.02	Paired	t=0.04 No Significant Difference
Experimental Rural	fall vs spring	3.98 vs 4.63	0.65	Paired	t=3.17 Highly Significant at .01
Experimental Group	fall vs spring	4.18 vs 4.58	0.40	Paired	t=1.52 No Significant Difference
Control Urban	fall vs spring	4.41 vs 4.25	0.16	Paired	t=0.53 No Significant Difference
Control Rural	fall vs spring	4.60 vs 3.83	0.77	Paired	t=4.18 Highly Significant at .01
Control Group	fall vs spring	4.51 vs 4.01	0.50	Paired	t=2.91 Highly Significant at .01
Fall Sample	Experimental vs Control	4.18 vs 4.51	0.33	Unpaired	t=1.09 No Significant Difference
Spring Sample	Experimental vs Control	4.58 vs 4.01	0.57	Unpaired	t=2.30 Significant at .05

The total number of clauses is an important consideration when measuring growth in language facility. In every category the experimental group showed an improvement. Indeed, the total group showed a highly significant improvement at the .01 level. The control group showed a decrease in the number of clauses produced in the same time interval, and that decrease was significant at the .05 level for the entire group.

When comparing the mean differences of the two groups for the year, we find that there is a highly significant difference between the two groups. This difference is again probably caused in part by the attitude toward school and by the amount of oral language opportunity presented to the students.

The students in the experimental group consistently displayed an attitude of wanting to perform well. This attitude was fostered by the Specialized Language Activities approach and undoubtedly carried over into performance on the speech sample. The students in the experimental group also had ample practice in oral communication. By spring they were rarely without anything to say. Visitors to the project often commented on the active oral participation in all activities. The opportunity for practice, peer and teacher encouragement, and the unstructured classroom setting all contributed to this growth in language facility.

TABLE XI

SPEECH SAMPLE

Number of Clauses

GROUP	COMPARISON	MEANS	MEAN DIFFERENCE	"t" TEST	SIGNIFICANCE
Experimental Urban	fall vs spring	14.87 vs 18.20	3.33	Paired	t=1.96 No Significant Difference
Experimental Rural	fall vs spring	13.36 vs 16.73	3.37	Paired	t=4.77 Highly Significant Difference
Experimental Group	fall vs spring	13.97 vs 17.32	3.35	Paired	t=4.23 Highly Significant at .01
Control Urban	fall vs spring	11.88 vs 10.35	1.53	Paired	t=2.18 Significant at .05
Control Rural	fall vs spring	11.59 vs 10.64	0.95	Paired	t=1.22 No Significant Difference
Control Group	fall vs spring	11.72 vs 10.51	1.21	Paired	t=2.26 Significant at .05
Fall Sample	Experimental vs Control	13.97 vs 11.72	2.25	Unpaired	t=2.21 Significant at .05
Spring Sample	Experimental vs Control	17.32 vs 10.51	6.81	Unpaired	t=7.01 Highly Significant Difference

5. DID THE STUDENTS LIVING IN THE COUNTRY BENEFIT MORE THAN IN TOWN STUDENTS?

No. Tables XII and XIII summarize information found in Tables I through XI in terms of significant (at least the .05 level) improvement during the course of the year for the experimental group and the control group.

Table XII deals with the improvement for the experimental group. Here we see that the rural group showed eight areas of improvement while the urban group showed six areas. The total group improved significantly in seven areas. This table shows that the method was not anymore effective with students living out of town than those living in town.

The experiment took place, of course, in a rural section of Maine. Students were classified as urban or in town if they resided within the town limits of the two largest communities. These are Norway and South Paris and their combined population as twin towns is 7000. The population in the rest of the communities in the school district does not total over 5000. Students within the Norway-Paris twin town area receive some benefits that are not afforded the students in the rest of the district such as: participation in extra-curricular activities, organized recreation, clubs, and various social opportunities.

TABLE XII

Areas of Significant Improvement in the Experimental Group

	URBAN	RURAL	TOTAL GROUP
I.Q.	X	X	X
Grade Equivalent Reading	X	X	X
Standard Score Reading	X	X	X
Grade Equivalent Word Knowledge			
Word Knowledge Standard Score			
Writing Sample: Number of Deviations from S.A.E.	X	X	X
Writing Sample: Mean Number of Words per Clause	X		
Writing Sample: Ratio of Multi-Clause Sentences to Single-Clause Sentences	X	X	X
Speech Sample: Number of Deviations from S.A.E.		X	X
Speech Sample: Mean Clause Length		X	
Speech Sample: Mean Number of Clauses		X	X
TOTALS	6	8	7

NOTE: The "X" in a column indicates that this group did show an improvement at the significance level of at least .05 for the test indicated. For further detail refer to Tables I through XI.

Since there were so few areas of improvement for the students in the control group, it is best to say that the traditional program did not stimulate improvement anymore for the rural group than the urban group. By inspection, one might be tempted to comment that two for the urban youngsters is highly significant compared with zero for the rural students. The almost complete lack of areas of improvement makes this researcher reluctant to make that kind of a statement.

TABLE XIII

Areas of Significant Improvement in the Control Group

	URBAN	RURAL	TOTAL GROUP
I.Q.			X
Grade Equivalent Reading	X		X
Standard Score Reading			
Grade Equivalent Word Knowledge			
Word Knowledge Standard Score			
Writing Sample: Number of Deviations from S.A.E.			
Writing Sample: Mean Number of Words per Clause			
Writing Sample: Ratio of Multi-Clause Sentences to Single-Clause Sentences			
Speech Sample: Number of Deviations from S.A.E.	X		X
Speech Sample: Mean Clause Length			
Speech Sample: Mean Number of Clauses			
TOTALS	2	0	3

NOTE: The "X" in a column indicates that this group did show an improvement at the significance level of at least .05 for the test indicated. For further detail refer to Tables I through XI.

6. WAS THERE A CHANGE IN ATTITUDE TOWARD SCHOOL? HOW IS THIS SHOWN?

Most youngsters involved in the Specialized Language Activities program possessed a negative attitude toward school. This attitude was also prevalent among the students in the control group. This attitude has been brought on by many things.

Oxford Hills High School is located in an area designated by the U.S. Office of Economic Opportunity as economically depressed. Using the Warner SES scale the average family economic level is upper lower. Most of the wage earners work in jobs which do not require special skills. Twenty percent of the students in the groups included in the study live in homes which do not contain at least one of the original parents. All of these factors work at producing students who find school inappropriate.

The majority of these students have had some experiences in school which could have contributed to an indifference toward school in general. One major factor would be a lack of success. 67% of the students in both the experimental group and the control group have repeated at least one grade since they have been in school. This fact would surprise many who make the claim that social promotion is the rule in modern American schools.

An examination of grades for the first half year of the eighth grade revealed a trend toward failure and further pointed out the similarities of the two groups.

Grade 8 - First Quarter

	Percent of Students Failing Courses
Experimental Group	51%
Control Group	47%

Grade 8 - Second Quarter

	Percent of Students Failing Courses
Experimental Group	35%
Control Group	36%

By inspection it is easy to see that there is no difference between the two groups for this period. For the same period of time during the experimental year, however, there is a difference:

Grade 9 - First Quarter

	Percent of Students Failing Courses
Experimental Group	19%
Control Group	24%

The difference for the first quarter is not particularly significant; the second quarter, however, indicates a definite trend:

Grade 9 - Second Quarter

	Percent of Students Failing Courses
Experimental Group	19%
Control Group	32%

Using the chi square test of significance, this difference is significant at the .05 level. It is interesting to note that the 19% is also the mean percent of students in the entire student body failing at least one course during that period.

The grades for the entire ninth grade year were also examined.

Grade 9 - Complete Year

	Percent of Students Failing Courses
Experimental Group	7%
Control Group	22%

Using the chi square test of significance, this difference is significant at the .001 level. This researcher feels that this difference is a clear indicator of a change of attitude toward school. Coming as it did in the first year of high school, perhaps the positive effect of non-failure will be a lasting influence upon the Specialized Language Activities group.

School attendance was selected as another indicator of a negative or a positive attitude toward school. The youngsters having long illnesses were eliminated from these data as this is not the type of absence caused by a dislike of school.

Grade 9 - Mean Number of Absences

	First Quarter	Second Quarter	Year
Experimental Group	1.3	1.5	6.2
Control Group	2.2	2.1	9.8

One can see the trend establishing itself in the first two quarters. Using the chi square test of significance, the difference between the yearly means is significant at the .05 level. There could be many reasons for this difference. A contributing factor has to be the participation in the Specialized Language Activities project. In the project these students were physically and mentally involved in a program designed for them. They were in a course which recognized them as important individuals capable of succeeding.

After spending a year with these students the teachers involved had a feeling of real accomplishment. They were able to see the students improve in their language ability. They saw them become actively involved in the group work necessary to producing a videotape. They observed changes

in attitude which indicated a positive growth. Some of these changes can be determined by reading the following anecdotes recorded by the teachers.

Lois: At the end of the year she was happy to learn that she could continue in the program another year but was concerned about being able to take it in her junior year.

Senior Citizens: After a group of SLA students made a presentation/demonstration for the senior citizens, Mrs. Bailey, one in attendance, went to Miss Lizotte, her neighbor and said seriously, "But Pat, I thought you taught slow youngsters."

Many Students: "This is a good book; I'll let you read it when I'm through."

Jim: used the word "stereotyping" in science class (his teacher came to tell us) after we had been discussing it in class.

Brenda: (after seeing results of reading test) "See, I told you we were smart."

Bill: Bill looked at his good grade on his final exam and exclaimed: "That's <u>my</u> test grade?"

Visitors to the school and to the project confirmed the staff observation that the Specialized Language

Activities students looked different. The staff felt that the students were more concerned about personal grooming. This was probably due to the daily possibility of being the talent in a videotape segment. We further hope that part of the reason would be a change in attitude toward self.

Perhaps attitude change was the most important contribution of the project. It certainly was with one division of students. In this particular group there were sub-groups composed of students from various communities within the school district. This sub-grouping produced an extreme insular state of mind and brought about such comments as: "Hey, I don't want to sit beside that scab!" or "I won't work with that scum!" or "Oh, no! He's not in our group, is he?" This, of course, created real problems for the teachers who realized that the success of the program depended upon efficient small group work. It took over half the year to resolve these difficulties. In the spring, however, it was particularly rewarding to observe this class working in small groups. They had changed. They could get along with each other. They were recognizing each other as individuals with something of value to contribute toward the group effort. The attitude change in this group did indicate that Specialized Language Activities had made a difference.

Here are some teacher observations about specific individual attitude changes:

Paul: a) Paul was removed from school the previous year for disciplinary reasons.

b) history of poor grades/failures--repeating freshman year

c) entering attitude--school is a bore--refusal to participate either in group or individually calling others 'stupid' and 'dumb'--looked for every opportunity to clown or 'goof off'

(attitude changes)

a) wanted to tell personal things that happened to him

b) wanted teachers aware that he had outside job--therefore, part of reason why he did not do more in class

c) group's encouragement got him to actively participate in role-playing/complimented him and "shamed" him into doing his part to have total production be successful--further praise from group and instructors encouraged Paul to volunteer

d) when actively involved he had no time to disrupt class

Jim: entering attitude

a) attitude of self-failure

b) very talkative, but no students who would accept him

c) anxious to please teachers, but unable to cooperate with class members

d) had very dominating attitude in group work--
"This is my idea, accept it."
"I'll be chairman; you'll do this."--anxious to work, but only as it gave himself the limelight

journal quote--"Please read" written above--
"Everybody hates me nobody likes me, guess I go eat worms."

(behavioral changes)

a) "I guess I have been a real clutz in not trying to see how other people feel."

b) while student director of a tape realized weaknesses and sought continued advice from the drama teacher--also, out of concern for a good production

c) later in year more willing to take secondary role, and help as a group member

Charlie: entering attitude

a) extremely negative

b) refusal of three school systems to have him

c) <u>extreme</u> reading and writing problems

d) violent outbursts of temper

e) unwilling and afraid to try

f) lack of any friends in school--nearly completely unaccepted

(behavioral changes)

a) enthusiasm and willingness to participate in class

b) coming to SLA room to talk particularly during the teachers' free period

c) Charlie still failed some of his subjects, but indicated a willingness to come back as a probationary sophomore in order to continue in SLA

d) Charlie said, "SLA has done something for me."

The teachers in the project sum up the success of the program in three main points:

A. Accept each as an important individual

1. as he is, for <u>what he is</u>

2. do not look at them as something you are about to miraculously remake within the next nine months

B. Listen to all they have to say

1. attitude--what they have to say is important

2. allow them to confide

3. be available for confidences--<u>listen</u>

C. Involve them

1. interest-centered units
2. <u>activity</u>--each has a role, look at each role as being important
3. working and doing--not sitting and listening to teachers

B. Planning Results

Planning sessions on Saturdays and during the summer resulted in the units included in Appendix B. Summer sessions were also devoted to teacher made video tapes which gave instruction in basic production techniques. Many of the units in Appendix B have been used to date. Quite often the students will be motivated by a staff-prepared unit to design one of their own. The units have proven to be very workable and of considerable interest to the students.

2. RESULTS BEYOND EXPECTATIONS

Actually, when one examines closely the information and narrative in section one, it is obvious that the students did exceed beyond original expectations in many areas of improving language facility and in changing attitude.

The main evaluation contained in section one deals with the students in the experimental groups and the control groups. For the purpose of setting up a scientific experiment, the students falling into the 85-100 I.Q. range were the only ones considered. The project did work with one other group which must be mentioned here.

The group not included in the statistical analysis consisted of eleven students with I.Q.'s below 85. There was one with a score of 45, one with 54, three in the 60's, and the rest between 70 and 85. Since we did not have a similar group to use as a control, we did not include them in the actual statistical analysis.

It was found, however, that these students all made progress in language skills. They participated in the program in almost the same manner as the other groups with more ability, but they were unable to work alone or without direction quite as well. Very few of the technical tasks involved in videotaping confused them. It did take longer for them to master the equipment, and the teachers did check these students more often to insure that the equipment was being operated correctly.

These students made progress. They really seemed to appreciate the idea of being in what had become to the school a prestigious program. As a result of their enjoyment of being so deeply involved, they overextended themselves and tried to always do an outstanding job.

With this group, it was easy to observe the attitude change that came from group work, the innovative program, and peer and teacher encouragement. As the year progressed, they certainly started exhibiting real self-confidence that carried over into many aspects of their lives. There is no question that they became concerned about many things that had not concerned them before. Grooming, manners, self, family, school, community, and even language took on a new dimension for these very slow students.

This prideful change of attitude carried over into much of their classwork. Often these students were more critical of their own work than the other divisions were of theirs. They often did painful retakes trying to perfect their tapes--learning all of the time. Indeed, some of their tapes were chosen as demonstration models for other classes. It should be stressed here that technical perfection in final productions was not a goal of the project. The main goal was to place students into situations where they would be motivated to use the language.

The unstructured aspect of the classes, the informality of the classroom situation, and the sincere concern of the teachers all contributed to the progress made by these students during the year.

It was also interesting to note the results of a school-wide standardized test featuring grammar and usage. Although the students in the Specialized Language Activities experimental group had not received any formal instruction in grammar or usage, their scores on the SRA writing skills test put them in the 42nd percentile. This was exactly the placement of the control group mean. The control group had received instruction during the year on many of the skills and concepts on the examination.

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